

# —OUTCOMES—

## *The* **POWER** *of* **PARTNERSHIP**

CBHS programs create a positive  
*domino effect* in the “real world”

**MIDDLE  
TENNESSEE**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

## DREAM CATCHER

Vernice “FlyGirl” Armour  
soars as a 2014–15  
Distinguished Alum



“FLYGIRL”

## BETTER OUTCOMES



Dean Terry Whiteside

I'm proud to share this second issue of *Outcomes* magazine with friends and valued stakeholders. It highlights just a few ongoing efforts and successes in the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences (CBHS) at MTSU.

I judge the success of CBHS using three questions:

- Are we **preparing the next generation** of professionals to succeed in their chosen professions?
- Are we using our knowledge, research, and thought to **serve the community**?
- And are we continually taking advantage of opportunities to expand our academic and public reputation to **increase the value** of every degree our students earn?

The answers I have found are exciting, and they fill the pages of this magazine. Associate Dean Scott Colclough and professors from the Department of Health and Human Performance recently went to Seoul, South Korea, to collaborate with our partners at Kookmin University. Human Science, Psychology, and Social Work professors and their students are taking advantage of our Collaborative Learning and Leadership Institute, a partnership with Murfreesboro City Schools, to advance opportunities for real-life application in their fields of study. These and so many other things happening in the college are examples of the ways CBHS ensures rigorous study, expands research, and contributes to new thought leadership across our six academic disciplines.

Our graduates tell the world how well we've done! Last October, we celebrated the presentation of the 2014–15 Distinguished Alumni Award to Exercise Science graduate Vernice Armour ('97). When she visited campus during Homecoming weekend and shared her journey—highlighting that her many achievements would never have been possible without her MTSU degree—I felt I could have walked through a wall amid the rousing applause delivered by our current students! Vernice, like so many of our graduates, has seen doors open that she never imagined, and that is truly the best outcome of all! o

I AM *true* **BLUE**™

# MIDDLE TENNESSEE

STATE UNIVERSITY.

COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL  
AND HEALTH SCIENCES

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## OUTCOMES

 Spring 2015

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# NEWS

from across the six helping disciplines that comprise the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences

## Health and Human Performance

Associate Dean **Scott Colclough**, along with Health and Human Performance (HHP) faculty members Drs. **Minsoo Kang** and **Yun Soo Lee**, visited **Kookmin University (KU)** in Seoul, South Korea, to solidify a Memorandum of Understanding and establish a timeline for programming that will take place over the next two years as part of an ongoing CBHS partnership. The weeklong visit was filled with daily meetings with officials and program presentations at KU, Seoul National University of Education (SNUE), Korea National Sport University (KNSU), and Ulsan Sports Science Middle and High School. “It was tremendous to see the attention that is being given to one of the most exciting and fastest growing career fields in the world, especially while visiting Ulsan. We came back with ideas on how we might partner with local high schools to get students on track to set their sights on sports management, fitness training, and the wide array

of jobs that can begin with HHP degrees,” Dr. Colclough said. “If all goes as planned, several students and administrators from the high school will visit MTSU next summer along with KU undergraduate students who have graduate studies aspirations.” Dr. Lee expressed similar excitement about the trip and possibilities for the future. “This trip is the foundation of building a strong global relationship. It will include the cultural and academic exchange of undergraduate and graduate students and academic and research collaboration opportunities for students and faculty while expanding the recruiting pipeline within another country. It adds to the visibility and prestige of our program.” Other relationships have similar possibilities. Dr. Kang has successfully collaborated with Dr. Jae-Hyeon Park, director of the Research Center at KNSU. The college has already hosted four visiting scholars, including



Drs. **Yongkyu Jang**, SNUE provost, and **Young Suk Lee**, provost of Student Affairs at Cheongju National University of Education, both of whom spent time with the MTSU visitors in South Korea.

MTSU’s **exercise science** experts have worked wonders with people who suffer from incomplete spinal cord injuries. Now the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has given them the opportunity to perform a comprehensive study that could change how health professionals treat these patients who retain some sensation or motor function. With a \$388,894 NIH grant, Drs. **Don Morgan** and **Sandy Stevens** have been recruiting, testing, and following up with clients

eligible for treatment in MTSU’s nationally recognized aquatic rehabilitation laboratory. Participants will help the scientists determine the effect of underwater treadmill training on the mobility, health, and quality of life of



## Human Sciences

individuals who are partially paralyzed. The study is unusual for a university not connected to a college of medicine or a teaching hospital. According to Morgan, “We’re doing work here at MTSU that, as far as I know, is not being done anywhere else in the world at this level.” ◦

## Criminal Justice Administration

**Lynda Williams** ('85) will be visiting campus later this year to share information with CBHS students about her 27-year career with the U.S. Secret Service, which included serving as part of the security team for Vice President Al Gore. Williams was among several CBHS alums who attended Homecoming 2014, enjoying festivities and watching the football game with President and Mrs. Sidney A. McPhee. “I am really looking forward to coming back in the spring and sharing my experience with students, visiting with my favorite professor, Dr. [Lance] Selva [currently the interim chair of the department]. Hopefully, I can recruit some ambitious applicants while I am back here!” Williams said.

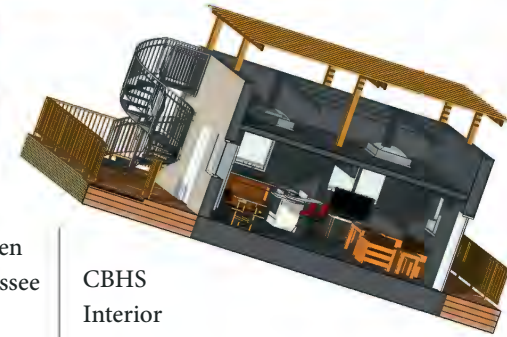
**Jared Brentz**, a Criminal Justice Administration major and amputee golfer, successfully defended his Mesquite NV ParaLong Drive National Championship in 2014, blasting a 409-yard shot in the final round. Brentz was born with clubfeet and arthrogyrosis, a rare congenital condition that causes stiff joints and muscle weakness. At age 12, after consultation with his parents, he decided to have both legs amputated below the knees. Undaunted, Brentz competed on his middle school golf team in eighth grade, and his team won the district title. He was a four-year letter winner in golf and wrestling in high school and was named to the All-District team as a senior. ◦



Congratulations to **Dr. Beth Embry** on receiving the Women in Higher Education in Tennessee (WHET) 2014 Woman of Achievement Award. Department chair **Deborah Belcher**, who presented the honor at the WHET Conference, said, “No one could be more deserving of the award. It is a pleasure to work with such a caring professional who always puts her students first. Dr. Embry always inspires others with her grace and courage.”



Imagine a dress made of layered blue paint chips and woven strips from MTSU flyers and posters on the way to be recycled. Students in an **Interior Design Visual Presentations** class didn't just imagine it—they constructed such a garment, and it won the 2014 Best in Show Award at the Tennessee Chapter ASID State Conference student competition. The dress, along with a coordinating hat and handbag, were modeled by Child Development and Family Studies major **Molly Curtis**. True Blue!



CBHS Interior design students were part of **Team Tennessee**, a group of MTSU and Vanderbilt students that competed in the U.S. Department of Energy's 2015 **Solar Decathlon**. The group was one of 18 teams that survived the cut out of 50 competing universities from around the world. Team Tennessee designed and built a less than 1,000-square-foot solar-powered home. The project will become a Habitat for Humanity home for a low income family in Nashville. “Obviously, we were excited to provide our students with this unique applied knowledge experience and enjoyed the prestige of working with Vanderbilt. A seat at the table for interior design is essential to the continued development of cost effective and easily accessible sustainable products and services for wider community access and use,” said Dr. **Janis Brickey**, Human Science professor and one of the project's advisors. “Additionally, our corporate supporters will gain access to the project research and outcomes, and many will have an opportunity to showcase their innovations.” ◦

*continued on page 6*

## Nursing



## Medicine for Guatemala

For the second year in a row, nursing students participated in the **Education Abroad** program with a trip to Guatemala. They visited one of the country's poorest regions to help people in need by providing basic medical care under the supervision of Associate Professor **Amanda Flagg** and Assistant Professor **Richard Meeks**. Dr. **Ric Morris**, Foreign Languages and Literatures, documented the trip in *Medicine for Guatemala*, which follows students from planning and raising money for the trip and also explores how students were changed by the experience.

The School of Nursing has expanded its affiliation with **Maury Regional Medical Center** in Columbia, Tenn. No longer just a clinical affiliate, the collaboration now includes a partnership in research as the medical facility seeks to attain magnet status (a designation that signifies that nurses are valued and integrated into

the shaping of research-based practices and are rewarded for advancing the practice). Dr. **Jenny Sauls**, director of the school, said faculty and students are already benefiting from the association. "Amanda Flagg and Sherri Stevens now serve on the hospital's Research Advisory Board, and Shelly Moore and Michelle Finch are conducting on-site research," Sauls said. "Most recently, at Maury Regional's sponsored Research Fair for nursing students, two of our undergraduate students brought home second- and third-place awards out of 132 poster submissions. We are truly proud of our students and faculty who are contributing to making this one of our best efforts!"

Experiential learning is a requirement in nursing education. Nowhere is it more critical than in community health. Dr. **Sharon Whiteside** took advantage of the



## Psychology

MTSU students swept the awards at the 2014 MidSouth School

**Psychology Conference**. Graduate student **Crystal Armstrong** took first place among graduate students from universities in Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. "Close-ness with Fathers and Fear of Intimacy among College Students" was the title of Armstrong's research. **Katie Holmes** took second place and the Ballard Award for outstanding graduate work in school psychology at the M.A./Ed.S. level. Holmes has honed her skills as a member of Student Support Services and graduate assistant at the Center for Dyslexia. **Grace Benedict** completed the sweep with the third-place award at the conference. Benedict, a wife, mother, and graduate student with a rigorous course load, is looking forward to her future as a school psychologist. Dr. **Jim Rust**, director of the School Psychology graduate program, said, "Sitting in the audience and listening to our students compete with their peers from other institutions was amazing. The fact that they won all three awards gave me great pride." o

college's partnership with **Nissan** to give her students hands-on experience staffing the company's annual flu clinic at its Smyrna plant. Whiteside and other faculty members supervised third- and fifth-semester nursing and medical-surgical students working as an interdisciplinary health team. "The opportunity to participate in the Nissan flu clinic is such a rewarding experience for student nurses because it allows us to serve our community," said Gregory Sirising, a fifth-semester senior. "This is my second year participating in the flu clinic, and it has helped me to become more confident in dealing with clients and perfect the skills taught in the classroom." o

## Social Work

FOSTERING  
HOPE

**Giovanna Gomez** made a big impression on the **Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS)** while she was an MTSU student. During an internship with the state agency, Gomez collaborated with MTSU film students to produce *Fostering Hope*, a documentary that features foster families in Tennessee. The department has since made the film a permanent part of its website. (See

www.tndc.org.) The agency was also impressed with Gomez: after her 2014 graduation, she went to work for DCS as a social worker. Gomez said her success is due to support she got from her husband, the Social Work faculty at MTSU, and the scholarship she received that helped her feed her passion for helping others as a nontraditional student. "My own children were in high school when I entered MTSU to finish a degree that I started way back when, but I never felt out of place," Gomez said. "I wish the University would put more effort into letting individuals like me know how welcome they will feel and how much they can improve their lives by completing a dream that they might have had to put aside for all the things that life throws your way."



On January 14, 2014, **Kimberly Ligon** left for the largest U.S. military base in Afghanistan, Bagram Airfield, on her first U.S. Army deployment. With four other soldiers, the M.S.W. student made up a casualty liaison team responsible for sending accurate reports to Army command. The quality of her work and service earned her a promotion. "I'm now a sergeant! I'm looking forward to more responsibility and the networking opportunities that will come along with the two days a month I'll spend fulfilling my duties to the Tennessee National Guard in Mt. Carmel," she said. When she wasn't working at her assigned duties, Ligon said she spent the time in Afghanistan writing, blogging, participating in ministry events, and volunteering at the USO on base. Ligon plans to continue to weave her education into her love of service. Her work at the Boys and Girls Club of Murfreesboro should meet the practicum hours required for her M.S.W. degree. Her former professor and M.S.W. coordinator, Dr. Barbara Turnage, stayed in touch with Kimberly during her deployment and is glad to have her safely back. "Kimberly is a special young woman, and I am sure her transition back to the classroom and study is going to be a smooth one," Turnage said. "She is dedicated to being a part of the solution in everything that she encounters, and that is going to make her a success and an asset to our program and the profession." ◦



## More CBHS News

**Pam Wright** ('73) has a True Blue history of service and support. She's cochair of MTSU's \$80 million Centennial Campaign and helped launch that effort by funding the Wright Travel Endowed Professorship in the Jennings A. Jones College of Business. When CBHS began to develop its case for support, Wright was one of the first

to offer assistance by hosting fellow alums for a CBHS focus group session in her home last summer. The session allowed Dean Terry Whiteside to share his vision for MTSU's newest college and gain insight from an important group of stakeholders on how to strengthen their connection to their disciplines, the college, and the University. Throughout the

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NEWS continued from page 7

year, Wright kept up with programs and activities of the college until she was able to match her philanthropic goals with its needs. “I know that the level of ability and the size of the dreams that reside with many of the young people in our region far exceed their economic capacity,” Wright said. “Those are the young people that I feel compelled to help. They are often drawn to what many of us refer to as the ‘helping’ disciplines that make up our college and

make tremendous contributions to improving outcomes in the communities that they know from experience. If I can help them realize those dreams, then I know that I’ve made a difference.” The Wright Travel Endowed Scholars Fund, established through Wright’s pledge of \$100,000, will support scholarships and provide leadership coaching through the CBHS Office of Student Success, headed by Dr. Colby Jubenville.

The **Bruning Foundation** continued its philanthropic focus of supporting educational institutions that have demonstrated a clear record of success by pledging \$50,000.00 to establish the Wulff Family Endowed Fund in the School of Nursing. The foundation’s founder Herbert F. Bruning grew up in Brooklyn, New York, during the Depression and saw firsthand how the lack of education limited future options in life.

True Blue! o



Like us at [www.facebook.com/MTSUCBHS](http://www.facebook.com/MTSUCBHS)

## Congratulations!

## Congratulations to CBHS Promoted and Tenured Faculty for 2014!



**A. Cathy A. Cooper**, Nursing, tenured as associate professor

**B. Richard S. Farley**, Health and Human Performance, promoted to professor

**C. Mark C. Frame**, Psychology, tenured as associate professor

**D. Minsoo Kang**, Health and Human Performance, promoted to professor

**E. Gina R. Pisut**, Human Sciences, tenured and promoted to associate professor

**F. Lisa M. Sheehan-Smith**, Human Sciences, promoted to professor

**G. Barbara F. Turnage**, Social Work, tenured as professor o



# DREAM CATCHER

Vernice “FlyGirl” Armour soars as a 2014–15 Distinguished Alum

by Patsy B. Weiler



**A**LTHOUGH SHE LACKED ONLY A HANDFUL OF CLASSES TO graduate back in the mid-1990s, Vernice “FlyGirl” Armour placed her MTSU degree on hold to fulfill her dream of becoming a police officer. After graduating from the Metro Nashville Police Academy in 1996, she became a member of the Metro Nashville Police Department “Raiders”—the motorcycle unit—and patrolled the streets on a Harley-Davidson.

From her perspective, life was good. Armour was living her dream, and earning a diploma could wait. However, an insistent and vocal aunt had a different vision for her talented niece.

“My aunt literally told me—again and again and again—to finish school,” Armour said. “I remember I said, ‘Why? I’m doing what I want to do.’ My aunt looked at me and said, ‘It gives you options. You never know what tomorrow has in store, and you always want to have options.’”

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“EDUCATION  
PROVIDES  
OPTIONS.”

Though she didn't know it at the time, following that advice would open the door to a dynamic future that would take her from being a beat cop to becoming America's first African American female combat pilot and, eventually, a nationally recognized motivational speaker, inspiring thousands with her breakthrough story of hard work and accomplishment.

Speaking to students during Homecoming Week 2014, Armour had a clear and simple message learned from her aunt: “Education provides options.”

“Had I not gotten my degree, I would not be sitting at this table talking to you today,” Armour told a small but captivated audience at MTSU. “I would not have had the opportunity to go into the Marine Corps and become a commissioned officer.”

The former Marine captain was on campus to accept a 2014–15 Distinguished Alumnus Award, the highest honor presented by the MTSU Alumni Association. Armour graduated in 1997 with a B.S. in Physical Education and an emphasis in Exercise Science.

“I truly believe MTSU and a solid education are a gateway to the American dream . . . and continues to be for thousands of engaged students every day,” Armour said. “I learned life lessons in the classroom, on campus, and off. I feel a deep sense of gratitude and responsibility. **I am standing on many shoulders, and the most meaningful and purposeful action I can take is passing what I have learned on to future generations.**”

## EARNING HER WINGS

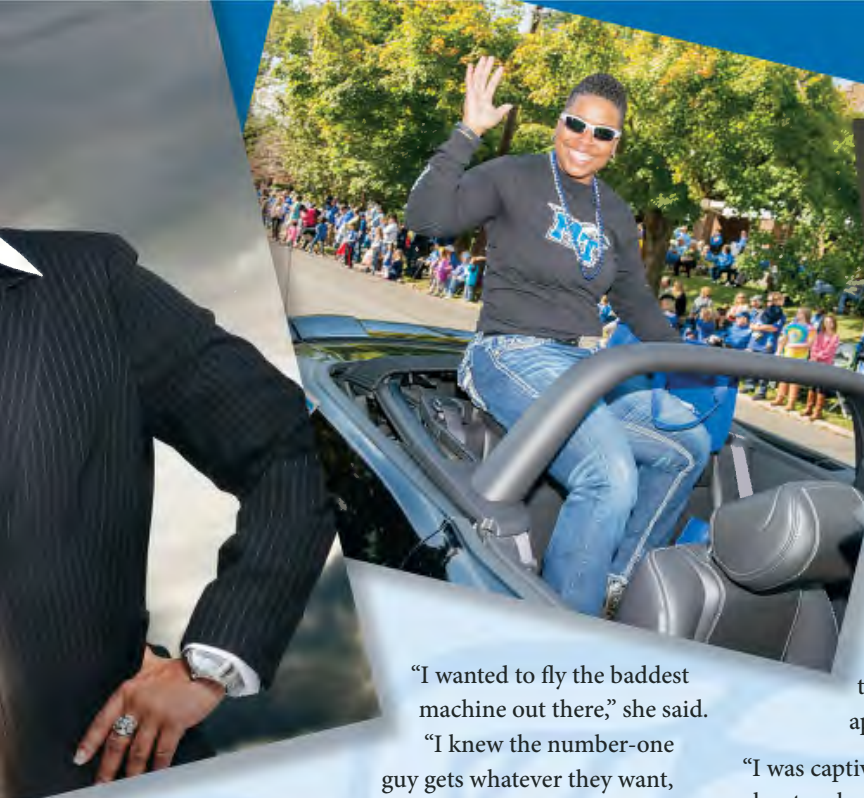
Early in her college career, Armour enlisted in the Army Reserves. She also joined the University's Army ROTC program. During an ROTC-hosted career day, Armour first saw a black female in a flight suit. It was an image she wouldn't forget. The experience left a lasting impression and a desire to enroll in flight school.

“There were plenty of failures along the way,” Armour said about her plans for the military life. “But, I decided if I was going to go in the service, I wanted to go into the toughest group out there.”

She applied three times to join the Marine Corps before finally being accepted and commissioned as a second lieutenant in December 1998. Then she failed her first flight school test. Although she passed the second exam and was fourth in her class, those with the first- and second-highest scores landed the two spots open for jet fighter pilots.

“I was devastated,” Armour said. “I believe everything works for the good, but I was totally upset.”

Initially, she had no intention of flying an attack helicopter, but when she locked her sights on her new plan, only one outcome was acceptable—being the best in her flight class at Naval Air Station Whiting Field, northeast of Pensacola. (The Naval Air Station at Whiting Field also provides training for U.S. Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force student pilots.)



“I wanted to fly the baddest machine out there,” she said. “I knew the number-one guy gets whatever they want, and I wanted to fly a Cobra.”

To be exact, she wanted to fly an AH-1W Super Cobra with a complex integrated avionics system and the ability to fire both rockets and missiles.

“So when other people were going out to the beach and to the clubs, I studied and studied,” she said.

Her hard work paid off. In July 2001, Armour was announced first in her class, made the Commodore’s List for academic excellence, and produced a score **higher than the previous 200 pilots trained at the base**. In addition, Armour was named 2001 female athlete of the year at Camp Pendleton in Southern California. A two-time titleholder of the camp’s female Strongest Warrior Competition, a strength and endurance test, she also played running back for the now-defunct San Diego SunFire women’s professional football team.

Soon after Armour’s flight school graduation, 9/11 occurred. When Armour heard the Pentagon had been struck, she knew her life would change. She soon found herself in Iraq, providing air support for ground troops. She served two combat tours.

## NEW HORIZONS

Armour had come a long way since her serendipitous glimpse of another African American woman in a flight suit. But that wasn’t the only MTSU experience that made a lasting impression and

helped open new horizons for her. She remembers being mesmerized by the late Maya Angelou when the poet appeared at Murphy Center.

“I was captivated by her,” she said. “She spoke for about an hour and it seemed like five minutes.”

Following her overseas deployment, Armour became a diversity officer and a liaison to the Pentagon. Her responsibilities included public speaking, something she found she enjoyed. Calling herself “a fixer,” Armour discovered she had a desire to help others reach their goals.

Armour knew it was time for a new career. It was time for her to leave the military.

“Everybody in this room, right now, has the opportunity to create the life they want from this moment forward, no matter how or what it looks like,” Armour said during her Homecoming talk. “It is not always easy. There will always be obstacles, but make them opportunities.”

Terry Whiteside, dean of the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences, listened with pride as his former student told her stories.

“Vernice is a very impressive and accomplished professional,” Whiteside said. “She is very energetic, an insightful leader, and great motivational speaker. After listening to her, I feel like I could walk through a wall!”

## SUCCESS ON THE RADAR

Today, Armour is the CEO of her own company, VAI Consulting and Training, based in Stafford, Va., near Washington, D.C. She founded the company

“Everybody in this room, right now, has the opportunity to create the life they want from this moment forward, no matter how or what it looks like.”

*continued on page 12*

in 2007 after leaving the Marines. During her first year of business, she produced more than six figures in revenue and **cracked the million-dollar mark in her first five years of operation.**

However, running her own business wasn't always clear skies and sunshine. Armour encountered pockets of financial turbulence during the earliest days.

Armour tells of being behind on her mortgage and needing work. Aware of an upcoming national conference in Atlanta, where there would be leads for speaking engagements, there was one big obstacle: money.

Instinctively, she knew that going to the event—somehow—was the right choice.

A friend arranged a place for her to stay on the way to the conference, where a fundraiser was being hosted for then presidential candidate Barack Obama. The future commander-in-chief recognized Armour in the crowd, thanked her for her service, and signed a picture she had brought along.

At the conference, Armour didn't have a nametag and didn't know how she was going to buy food or where she would sleep, let alone how she would get the money to register for the conference. Wondering what to do next, Armour was spotted in the lobby by a conference coordinator who had seen her at the previous year's event. He asked Armour if she could take the place of a facilitator who had backed out at the last minute. Organizers told her they would cover her registration fee and accommodations.

"Sometimes you have to make the gutsy move," Armour said. "It is not something you do haphazardly or without checking your risks, but **you weigh all the options and move forward even when you don't know the outcome.** There was no email or bulletin that arrived telling me everything was going to be okay. Life is just waiting for you to show up.

"Making the decision to attend the conference totally turned the trajectory of my company. Less than 30 days later, I had checks in my business account from companies like Walmart, Bank of America, and Boeing."

As an entrepreneur, Armour continues to influence the leadership of Fortune 500 companies with

Breakthrough Mentality, her powerful presentation designed to motivate success in life and business.

Armour has been featured on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, CNN, the *Tavis Smiley Show*, *The View*, and National Public Radio.

In 2011, she wrote *Zero to Breakthrough: The 7-Step, Battle-Tested Method for Accomplishing Goals that Matter*. (See the sidebar for a glimpse of those seven steps.)

## COPILOTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Off the big stages, Armour enjoys connecting with young adults. In April, she will return to MTSU as keynote speaker for the 2015 LGBT+ College Conference, "Diversify Your World," jointly presented by MTLambda and the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences.

The president of MT Lambda, Elizabeth Villasana, a senior Psychology major from Oak Ridge, called Armour "amazing."

"**After hearing her speak, you feel like you've got to get up and do something,** even if it is finishing the next assignment or making it to the next class," she said.

These days, Armour is no longer at the controls of an attack helicopter, but whether she is speaking to a corporate conference or college classroom, the FlyGirl continues to help people battle issues that might otherwise prevent them from exploring their options. o



"LIFE IS JUST  
WAITING FOR YOU  
TO SHOW UP."

# ZERO TO BREAKTHROUGH

IN HER BOOK, *ZERO TO BREAKTHROUGH*, VERNICE “FLYGIRL” ARMOUR OFFERS readers seven steps to help master momentum and chart their own success.

**Develop Consciousness and Awareness.** Recognize what you’re good at and how you really want to be spending your time.

**Stop Procrastinating and Prepare.** Unblock and release beliefs, fears, and past experiences that might be holding you down, and then lay the groundwork for success.

**Execute Situations with Self-Discipline.** Practice consistency and continue to achieve mastery.

**Acknowledge and Move Past Obstacles and Challenges.** Learn how to overcome external and internal roadblocks and troubleshoot problems without doing damage to your own best interests.

**Feel Fear and Focus Anyway.** Understand that fear is real but it does not have to derail you.

**Keep the Momentum Going.** Use one accomplishment or success to build on others.

**Complete Integration.** Make Z2B (Zero to Breakthrough) a natural part of your everyday approach to life to help solve problems, engage with new ideas, live life fully, and be a model for your children and community.

Find out more about Vernice “FlyGirl” Armour at [www.vernicearmour.com](http://www.vernicearmour.com).



Linda Gilbert

## true BLUE EDUCATOR EXTRAORDINAIRE

Vernice “FlyGirl” Armour wasn’t the only person connected to the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences (CBHS) who was recognized as a distinguished alumnus in 2014. **Linda Gilbert** (left), a dynamic educator, member of the CBHS advisory board, and director of Murfreesboro City Schools, was honored with the **True Blue Citation of Distinction** (Achievement in Education) award (non-MTSU faculty) during Homecoming Week.

“MTSU has been the standard-bearer for producing education professionals in this state,” Gilbert said. “Many individuals with distinguished careers have walked through the halls of learning at the University. I am extremely humbled by the selection.”

Gilbert has a long history with MTSU. From 2004 to 2010, she was a tenured graduate faculty member in the Department of Educational Leadership. She coauthored the MTeach grant designed to increase the number and quality of math and science teachers in Tennessee and worked to establish dual-enrollment opportunities between MTSU and Rutherford County Schools.

Her roots are deep in the soil of her hometown. Gilbert lives next door to the house where she grew up, and she, her husband, and children all attended Mitchell-Neilson public school, where she also once taught music.

“I’m proud to be deeply connected to Murfreesboro and MTSU,” Gilbert said. “Both of them are wonderful places and have played a great role in the person I am today and my love for educating children.” ◦

# The Collaborative Kind

Helping children read life's signals

by Gina K. Logue



Linda Gilbert

RESEARCH INDICATES THAT BY THE TIME MANY children are eight years old, they already have an idea of what they want to do with their lives and a perception of whether or not they think they can achieve it.

Dr. Linda Gilbert ('72, '79), director of Murfreesboro City Schools, MTSU alumna, and former MTSU professor, said, "By the time they leave us in sixth grade . . . in their minds, they already have a concept of hope or a concept of despair."

That's one reason Gilbert cofounded the Collaborative Learning and Leadership Institute (CLLI). A partnership between MTSU and Murfreesboro City Schools, the institute is designed to help children make a connection between what they are learning in school and what that education will mean to them as adults.

Housed at Mitchell-Neilson Elementary School, CLLI promotes interaction between MTSU students and grade school students whose dreams are not yet fully formed. The college students come from the College of Behavioral and Health

Sciences, academic home of the "helping disciplines" of criminal justice, health and human performance, human sciences, nursing, psychology, and social work.

## Cases in Point

An example of CLLI in action is a health literacy project guided by Drs. Catherine Crooks and Stuart Bernstein of the Department of Psychology. Fueled by an \$8,000 grant from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, Crooks, Bernstein, and their students work with young children and parents at Mitchell-Neilson and across Murfreesboro to help them

understand health issues related to literacy, such as when to go to the doctor and when to go to the emergency room.

Additionally, individuals with low literacy rates and those with linguistically diverse backgrounds are at risk when it comes to correct interpretation of medical information. For example, a prescription label might tell a patient to take medicine once a day. But the Spanish word for "eleven" is spelled the same way as the English "once," which could lead to overdosing by a non-English speaker. Such avoidable catastrophes are a real concern for the institute.

"We have examples of deaths here in Rutherford County because people have either taken medication incorrectly or couldn't read the labels," said Bea Perdue, CBHS development director. "Collaborations such as these are changing those outcomes."

*[Editor's note: Nashville-based Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), the nation's leading provider of healthcare services, also made a \$25,000 grant to the institute.]*

Practical applications go beyond health literacy. Murfreesboro Housing Authority, St. Thomas Rutherford Hospital mobile health centers, and family learning centers in public housing complexes also partner with CLLI.

The learning goes both ways. To highlight the positive influence of the institute, Mitchell-Neilson principal Robin Newell points to something that happened at her



An \$8,000 grant from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation funded a health literacy project.



Mitchell-Neilson principal Robin Newell

school involving a classic political allegory by George Orwell.

“Last year, our sixth-grade class was reading *Animal Farm*, and it just so happened that an MTSU class was reading the same book,” Newell said. “So they came over and had a book talk with our sixth-graders.”

Newell said the college students were impressed with the depth of the sixth-graders’ insight into Orwell’s multilayered dissection of political power and its corrupting influence.

“There is a purpose in what we do here at school, and they see that college freshmen are doing the same thing on a different level,” said Newell. “It was really empowering.”

## Rubber Meets Road

Gilbert points to studies that indicate the importance of addressing reading ability and comprehension when students are young.

“Your prisons are designed, as far as projecting the number of cells they will need, based on third-grade literacy,” she said.

The institute’s home is a nondescript structure between two classroom buildings at Mitchell-Neilson. Teachers do their planning in one room; students learn in the other. However, CLLI’s vision reaches farther. Gilbert sees potential in activities that

may change the future for local at-risk students in a nation where a child drops out of school every 16 seconds. She sees opportunities to replace resignation to mediocrity with critical-thinking skills, problem-solving techniques, better written and oral communication, and mental and emotional well-being.

Through the partnership with MTSU, Mitchell-Neilson students can gain the kind of inspiration that can propel them into an academic life they never imagined they could live.

“There are so many kids in the Murfreesboro City Schools who don’t even know there’s a college in town,” said Terry Whiteside, dean of the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences, who cofounded CLLI with Gilbert. “So the idea of going to college is a thought that has never crossed their minds.”

The underlying principle of the institute is that giving students tools to become leaders at an early age can help build better communities and provide employers with a more capable workforce.

“The collaboration is just in the beginning stages right now,” said Newell. “There’s a lot of potential for growth here.”

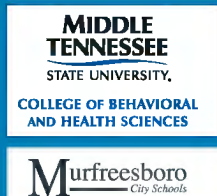
As it grows, CLLI is working hard to get help and support.

“We want to show that we can produce so that people will want to put their money into it,” Whiteside said.

Gilbert, Newell, and Whiteside know that true learning takes place at the intersection of education and everyday life. It might be said that CLLI puts a traffic signal at that intersection to guide children smoothly through. o

Students can gain the kind of inspiration that can propel them into an academic life they never imagine they could live.

A prescription label might tell a patient to take medicine once a day. But the Spanish word for “eleven” is spelled the same way as the English “once,” which could lead to overdosing by a non-English speaker.



Collaborative Learning and Leadership Institute



# Good Constitution

The on-campus celebration of the 227th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution last September included special guests who came to MTSU to help read the historic document.

Sixth-graders from Mitchell-Neilson Elementary School joined Tre Hargett, Tennessee secretary of state; MTSU coaches and student-athletes; and volunteers from the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences (CBHS) to read the Constitution's seven articles and 27 amendments, including the Bill of Rights, outside Cason-Kennedy Nursing Building.

"You all were absolutely the best readers here," said Dr. Terry Whiteside, dean of the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences, to the nearly 50 sixth-graders from the classrooms of Jennie Lovvorn and Gayle Porterfield.

"We're counting on you to carry this knowledge on," he added. "I'm really so proud of you all."

"We were honored to help. It [was] another great opportunity for us," said Mitchell-Neilson principal Robin Newell, who said that the special field trip happened in part because of the partnership between Murfreesboro City Schools and MTSU's new Collaborative Learning and Leadership Institute. o



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# Paying It Forward

Inspired by an on-campus LGBT+ event, alum Jon Breeding establishes a scholarship fund

by Diane Hughes

As a freshman in 1989, Jon Breeding attended a campus meeting of MT Lambda, a support group for LGBT+ students.

As a young man trying to understand his own sexuality at a time when society offered little acceptance, Breeding left the meeting and never attended another one.

“I was just coming out to myself,” said the 44-year-old Savannah, Tenn., native who now lives in Arlington, Virginia, and has a successful career as a financial risk manager for Freddie Mac. “My fear of being seen kept me from going back.”

Nearly a quarter-century later, in October 2013, Breeding was back on campus as MT Lambda celebrated its 25th anniversary with the first LGBT+ Alumni Dinner. This time, he wasn't in such a rush to leave.

“I stayed for the whole event,” he said.

Breeding did more than that. Deeply moved by what he saw at the dinner, he decided to endow a scholarship fund for students at MTSU: the LGBT Heroes Endowed Scholarship Fund.

“Sitting at the event that evening, I just realized the amazing human beings in the room. I felt like they are heroes who need to be recognized.”

Breeding attended the event at the invitation of then MT Lambda president Joshua Rigsby, who graduated in May 2014. While working to rebuild MT Lambda archives, Rigsby



“The most important thing is acceptance, and that’s what’s changing.”

had discovered that Breeding set up a fund in 2005 to help Lambda cover occasional expenses.

“I took the opportunity to reach out to Jon on social media and invite him to the alumni dinner,” said Rigsby, a Gallatin native who lives in Nashville.

At the dinner, Breeding was pleased to see the strides that MT Lambda has made over the last 25 years.

“The student leadership of MT Lambda has done an excellent job focusing on issues that are important to the LGBT+ community, ranging from updating MTSU nondiscrimination policies that protect LGBT+ students to reaching out to LGBT+ alumni,” Breeding said.

## Looking Back

During his college years, Breeding didn’t feel ready to be completely out of the closet. It’s easy to understand his reluctance. Lambda was formed in 1988—just one year before he arrived on campus—and the group’s founding was a response to homophobic attitudes expressed on campus.

Considering the social climate of the day, Breeding found a generous level of acceptance on campus. For example, as part of his work-scholarship financial aid, Breeding was assigned to work in the Admissions Office.

“The Admissions staff was so wonderful to me over the years,” Breeding said. “I was never out to them. I was myself there, though. And they never asked me about dating or girlfriends. I didn’t realize it at the time, but it was the highlight of my University experience, working with that group.”

While he did find acceptance among his coworkers, Breeding admits there were unpleasant experiences during his time on campus—times when he did not feel accepted as a gay man. But, he said, he doesn’t dwell on those.

“My heart has long since forgiven,” Breeding said.

## Looking Forward

In September last year, Breeding married Ryan McCannell, his partner of 20 years, in McCannell’s home state of Maine. Progress toward marriage equality, at least in some states, is part of the tide of tolerance Breeding sees.

“The most important thing is acceptance, and that’s what’s changing,” Breeding said.

In addition to the help Breeding’s scholarship will provide for LGBT+ students, Rigsby points to action MTSU took last year to give LGBT+ students easier access to other scholarships.

“MTSU expanded its criteria for diversity scholarships by adding sexual orientation and gender identity/expression to the list,” Rigsby said.

To start, the **LGBT Heroes Endowed Scholarship** will provide two \$500 scholarships per academic year. But just as support for LGBT+ students has grown, Breeding expects the scholarship will also grow. One way is through interest earned on the endowment through investments.

“The other way is through fundraising,” said Breeding, who hopes those who are interested in supporting MTSU’s LGBT+ population will donate. (See information below.)

Breeding is grateful for the positive effect MTSU has had on his life professionally and personally.

“When I think about my experience at MTSU, I think about those people I worked with, and it was a huge gift,” he said.

Even though neither side openly acknowledged Breeding’s sexual orientation, it’s evident that his coworkers, in their own way, gave Breeding what he most needed at the time: acceptance.

In his own way and his own time, Breeding is now paying that gift forward by honoring heroes of the past and investing in those of the next generation. ◦

## The LGBT Heroes Endowed Scholarship Fund

Those who would like to contribute to the scholarship may send donations to

Middle Tennessee State University  
Behavioral and Health Sciences  
LGBT Heroes Endowed  
Scholarship Fund (94901)  
Box 109  
Murfreesboro, TN  
37132

# Focus on Inclusion

Deloitte is a presenting sponsor of the second annual LGBT+ College Conference April 9–11, 2015.

**B**EFORE MT LAMBDA WAS ORGANIZED IN 1988, LGBT+ students at MTSU had few resources or support services, recalls alumna Diane Easter.

“I graduated in 1984, and, as I have told others, the gayest thing on the MTSU campus at that time was the female flag football team that I formed for intramurals,” she said.

Things have changed. April 2014 brought the inaugural LGBT+ College Conference to MTSU. It was an event that appealed to Easter personally and professionally. As an alum, she was excited to support LGBT+ students at her alma mater. As an employee at Deloitte’s Nashville office, Easter also saw an opportunity to get her employer involved.

“The MT Lambda group and its academic partner, the CBHS, were contagious with their passion for the event. Deloitte is equally passionate about diversity and inclusion,” Easter said.

According to Deloitte’s Jan Maddox, a director in the Nashville office, the company’s decision to sponsor the conference was an easy one.

“Inclusion is a focus for Deloitte and has been since the early ’90s,” Maddox said.

Other businesses also came on board as sponsors, including Nissan North America and the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee.

The conference, held during SpringOut! Pride Week, drew more than 220 students representing 21 LGBT+ student organizations from various colleges and universities. According to Dr. Will Langston, Psychology professor and faculty advisor, the three-day event was designed to bring together members of LGBT+ collegiate organizations from across the state.

“The goal was to educate them and to share ideas and solutions to common problems,” Langston said.

Plans are already being made for the 2015 conference. Motivational speaker Vernice “FlyGirl” Armour, an alum who graces the cover of this edition of *Outcomes*, is returning to MTSU this spring as keynote speaker at the 2015 LGBT+ College Conference April 9–11. The theme is “Diversify Your World.”

“We are also adding a research day at the beginning of the conference,” Langston said. “Students and faculty will be

invited to present research on issues confronting the LGBT+ community, with a focus on colleges and universities.”

Easter commended MTSU for hosting the conference and for serving as a place “where thought leadership is fostered and valued.”

“MTSU has shown that it recognizes its importance and its responsibility in the community,” Easter said. “That sounds like the perfect type of organization for Deloitte to choose as a partner.” o

Diane Easter

# The Personal Touch

Making sure a bump in the road doesn't derail an education

by Gina K. Logue

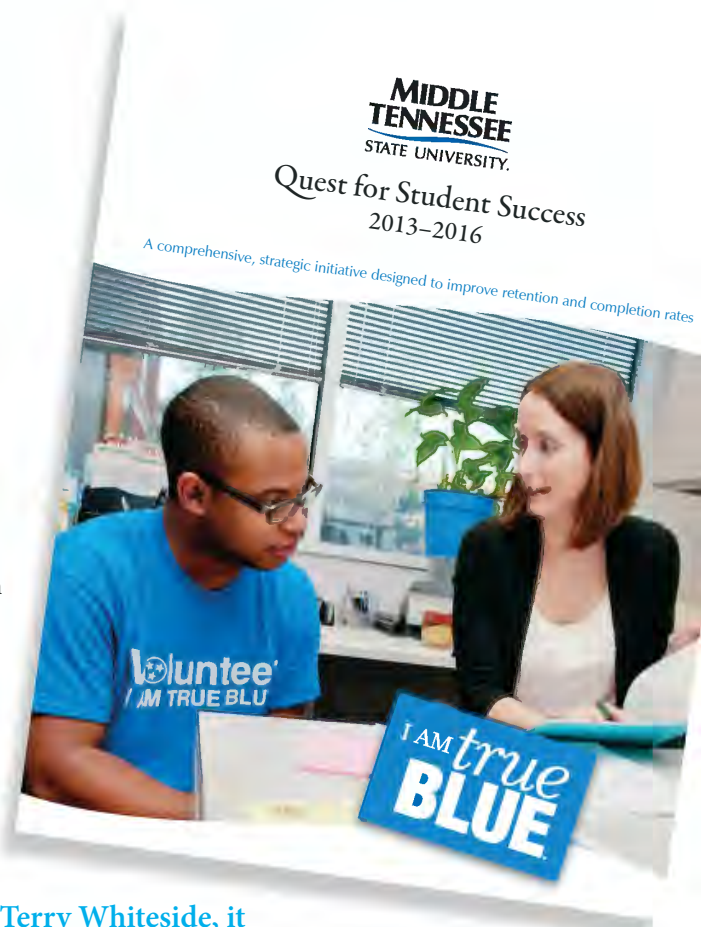


As part of the University's effort to improve student success and increase graduation rates, more than 40 new academic advisors have been hired to guide students along their respective degree tracks.

**R**ESearch shows that the first two years are critical to a university student. A bump in the road, especially at the beginning, can derail the progress of those struggling to stay enrolled.

Even with statewide and national accolades for its efficiency in creating college graduates, MTSU's continued success depends on its ability to help students earn college degrees. More than a year ago, President Sidney A. McPhee announced a major initiative—the MTSU Quest for Success—designed to make sure that every student who comes to MTSU with the drive to achieve will be met with the best instruction from excellent professors who care for their success. It creates a culture of high expectations coupled with personal attention when students struggle inside or outside the classroom. Such reforms also complement and reinforce Gov. Bill Haslam's "Drive to 55" program seeking to increase the percentage of Tennesseans with postsecondary degrees or certificates to 55 percent.

**UNDER THE LEADERSHIP** of Dean Terry Whiteside, it could be said that the **College of Behavioral and Health Sciences at MTSU has taken ensuring student success to a whole new level.** The following stories highlight two ways the College is going the extra distance to ensure the Quest ends well.



*continued on page 22*

MTSU is “walking the walk” when it comes to student success.



Brellinda Johnson leads the advising team for CBHS.

The Personal Touch  
continued from page 21

Negative outcomes result when students bypass advisors.

### It Takes a Village

Academia is replete with tales of students who had purchased their caps and gowns for commencement, thinking they were going to graduate, only to find out a few weeks before the end of the semester that they still needed specific classes to complete their requirements.

“Everyone knows a student who took a bunch of classes that could not be credited to their major or another who came back to campus for one class ... in order to graduate,” said Brellinda Johnson, who leads the advising team for the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences.

As part of the University’s overall efforts to improve student success and increase graduation rates, more than 40 new academic advisors have been hired to guide students along their respective degree tracks. To bring them all on board was expensive, especially in light of ongoing reductions in state higher education funding. But to University decision-makers, it was an investment worth making, and demonstrates that MTSU is “walking the walk” when it comes to student success.

Many of the new advisors will work for Johnson in CBHS. From a new office suite on the first floor

of the Cason-Kennedy Nursing Building, Johnson and her team of advisors, which now numbers 17, work tirelessly to keep students from falling through holes in the well-worn academic safety net.

“There are so many little things that have the capacity to negatively impact the student experience, and they become multiplied exponentially when a student doesn’t utilize an advisor,” Johnson said.

Those negative outcomes, Johnson said, more often than not result when students bypass advisors.

Having these new advisors working in tandem with professors will have a cumulative effect within the college. As experts in their disciplines, faculty members will continue to provide essential advice about courses, academic programs, and career and graduate school possibilities. The college-based advisors will support the faculty but also take a more proactive and real-time approach to students who are struggling. Using a new software package the University is adopting, college advisors will also be able to reach out to students who might be having trouble academically as identified through instructors’ alerts or the predictive analytics function of the software. Other universities have seen great results from similar, more proactive methods of advising.

Johnson said the real key to the new advisors’ performance, though, is more high touch than high tech—and that is to establish positive relationships that nurture an atmosphere of trust and caring with the students. Only then, she said, will new advisors be able to get students to take advantage of their expertise.

“We are going to have enough advisors to make it a proactive and 21st century holistic advising process that goes beyond course selection to provide the coaching and services that students need to increase their chances for degree completion and success beyond MTSU,” Johnson said.



## Man With a Plan

If you're refocusing your emphasis on helping students, it's beneficial to have a faculty member who was doing that long before "retention" and "graduation" became buzzwords. Terry Whiteside, dean of the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences, has one such professor, and he recently elevated him to a new position within the College to ensure his positive influence on student success is more widespread.

Meet Dr. Colby Jubenville. A master at building the kind of personal relationships that help graduates find jobs in the hard-to-crack sports management field, Jubenville has been designated the college's Special Assistant to the Dean for Student Success and Strategic Partnerships.

Jubenville's approach to his new responsibility boils a long title down to some easily digestible common sense.

"I think the two biggest challenges we face in higher education in terms of student success is helping students find their voice and then growing their confidence to act on that voice," Jubenville said.

In addition to getting students to use adversity to accelerate their growth, Jubenville is also tapping into his network, which is resulting in new kinds of entrepreneurial activity with strategic partners in the region. "We have some of the best minds in the country, and we must continue to actively and aggressively pursue those relationships that not only value what we offer as a college, but also are interested in making an investment in themselves and us," Jubenville said.

In a nutshell, Jubenville said other people saw the good in him at a time in his life when he could not see it for himself. That's what he wants to pass on to others.

One MTSU student who took Jubenville's advice to heart is Lance Wagner, who found a specific exercise he performed in one of Jubenville's classes to be instrumental in helping him land a job offer.

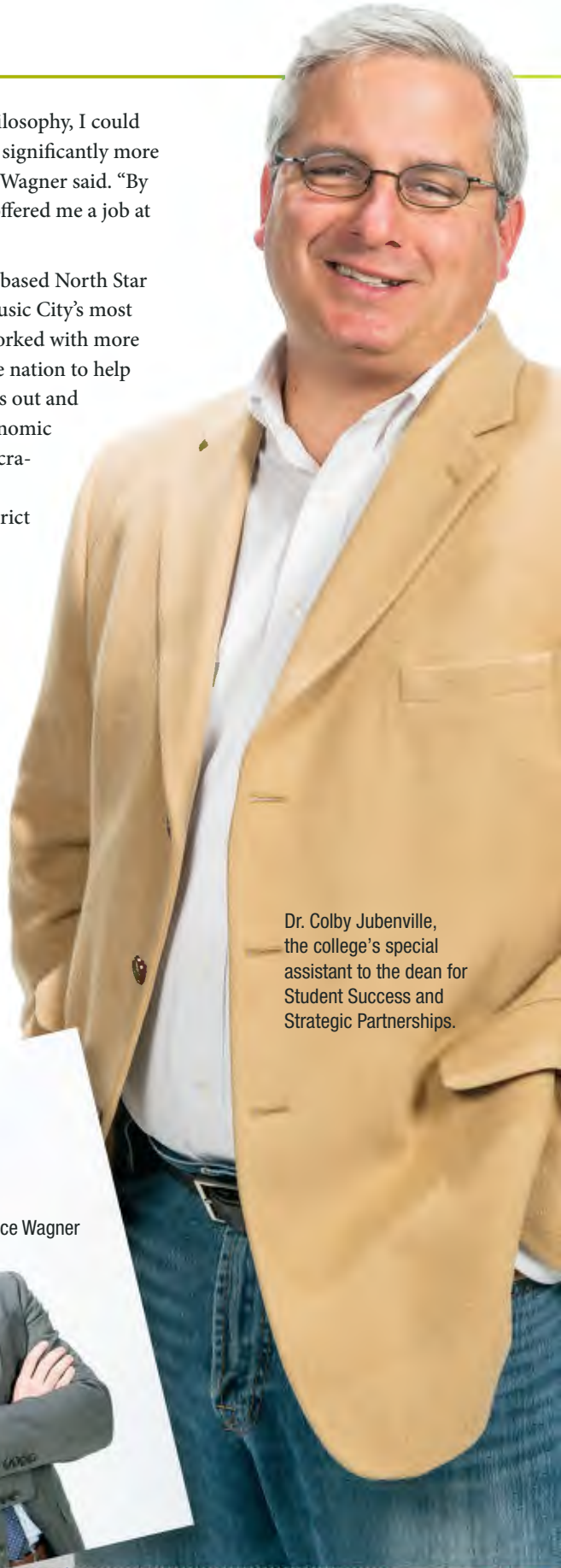
Wagner mentioned community branding expert Roger Brooks, whom Wagner had researched for the exercise, to a representative of a Nashville marketing firm with whom he had connected on LinkedIn.

"When talking about Roger's philosophy, I could see his face light up and become significantly more interested in what I was saying," Wagner said. "By the end of the conversation, he offered me a job at his company."

Wagner now works at Nashville-based North Star Destination Strategies, one of Music City's most unique companies, which has worked with more than 175 communities across the nation to help them develop a brand that stands out and leads to greater tourism and economic development. Clients include Sacramento, California; New Orleans, Louisiana; and the Business District in Memphis, Tennessee.

### Clearing the Way

No doubt it will take more than the efforts of one professor to clear the underbrush so that students will have a clear pathway to success. However, in concert with an enhanced team of advisors housed inside CBHS, and with the support of a University-wide, multi-pronged push to help students stay in school and make it to graduation, the College is primed to make great strides in what matters most—helping students succeed. o



Dr. Colby Jubenville, the college's special assistant to the dean for Student Success and Strategic Partnerships.



Lance Wagner



# PSYCHOLOGY AT WORK

## A signature academic program produces graduates ready to fix what ails unhappy workforce cultures

by Jen Stone

**I/O Psychology studies human behavior in the workplace.**

A 2013 GALLUP POLL INDICATED THAT MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF AMERICAN workers do not feel “engaged” at work. For about half, that means a general lack of interest or enthusiasm for what they do. For another 18 percent, “active disengagement” means they are more likely to have a poor attitude at work and be less productive and may even be dishonest with their employers.

An annual survey conducted later that same year by the Conference Board, a business research group, found that fewer than half of workers feel “satisfied” at work. Since that survey began in 1987, the percentage of dissatisfied workers has increased. Much of that lack of satisfaction might be attributed to reduced job security and increased healthcare costs.

Survey results like these are fairly dire. Corporations know that keeping employees happy at work is good for the bottom line. It’s no surprise, then, that the U.S. Department of Labor named industrial-organizational psychology (or I/O psychology) the fastest-growing occupation in the nation in 2014, with a projected growth rate of 53 percent until 2022. The field goes beyond traditional human resources practices to study human behavior in the workplace.

The increase in hiring bodes well for graduates of MTSU’s I/O psychology program because the University is one of just a few schools in the nation that offers an undergraduate degree in the field. MTSU also offers an M.A. with a concentration in I/O psychology.

### THE SCIENCE OF WORKPLACE PSYCHOLOGY

Graduates in I/O psychology most often work as human resource (HR) managers, recruiters, and benefits specialists, putting practices and policies into place to help employees find more satisfaction and happiness at work and help employers manage workers effectively and resolve problems fairly.

Since people in these roles typically oversee recruiting and hiring, health and wellness, employee disputes, and office management, I/O psychology equips them with an understanding of how to make the workplace a more interesting and satisfying place. Through research on behaviors and attitudes, I/O psychologists help improve employee satisfaction and morale by fine-tuning everything from hiring practices to training and management techniques. The goal is to increase happiness and productivity.

Undergraduate I/O psychology students at MTSU study how the brain works, especially when affected by mental illness, drugs, or sleep issues; how people



interact with others and in groups, specifically in workplaces; and how to deal with maladaptive behavior. They examine how to apply psychological techniques to the workplace to improve hiring, training, and leadership.

Students also have the opportunity to participate in the MTSU chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)—the world’s largest HR membership organization. In the last 15 years, SHRM has named four MTSU I/O

“The rigorous curriculum and the experiential learning component have served me exceptionally well. This is why why the program is continually lauded as one of the best in the nation.”

—Ali Jerden '98, Sr. Director, Human Resources, E. & J. Gallo Winery

psychology graduate students national outstanding graduate students of the year.

Profiled below are three successful MTSU I/O psychology graduates: **Stanley Silverman**, dean emeritus and professor emeritus at the University of Akron, who is considered by some to be the most influential living I/O psychologist; **Kawel LauBach**, chief human resource officer for Mohegan Tribal Gaming Authority in Connecticut; and **Jaye Murray**, who works in training and executive development for the U.S. Office of Personnel Management in Washington, D.C.



Stanley Silverman

### I/O ROYALTY

Stanley Silverman never planned to pursue a career in I/O psychology. He assumed he would become a dentist, as his father and brother had done. But at Ohio State University he developed an interest in psychology.

“With dentistry you could major in anything,” Silverman said, “so I decided to major in psychology, but when I graduated, I decided I wanted to go to graduate school for psychology as well.”

While looking for a graduate school, Silverman decided that he

really wanted an applied degree. His dream job was to work as executive director of human resources for IBM, and since he had done some research into I/O psychology at Ohio State, he decided that was the route to take.

“There were very few master’s programs in I/O psychology at the time,” he said. “I found two: one in Louisiana and one at MTSU.”

When Silverman found out that the chair of MTSU’s program was Dr. Willard Kerr, a

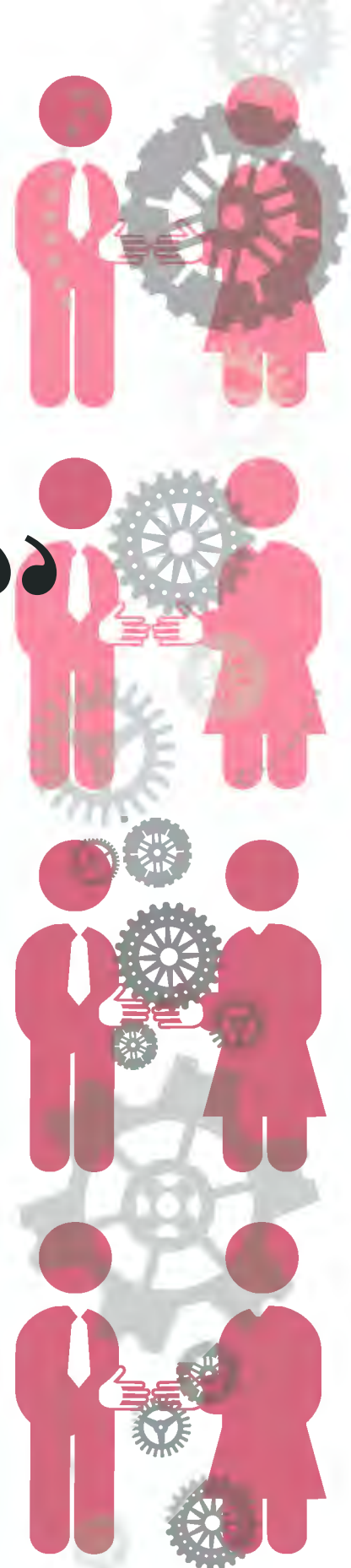
well-known writer of articles for *Journal of Applied Psychology*, he decided to come to Murfreesboro. His mentor became Dr. Stanford B. Golden, who helped Silverman with career advice that led to a personnel position in state government in Nashville. Silverman later earned a Ph.D. in I/O psychology at the University of Akron and became a consultant for companies including General Motors, AT&T, Goodyear, Allstate, and Disney.

Eventually, Silverman’s background in consulting took him to academia. He accepted an associate professor position at the University of Akron, and over the subsequent 35 years became a full professor, dean, and provost. He also did a lot of writing and chaired the first three I/O psychology conferences held separate from those of the American Psychological Association.

Today, he’s retired and spends about half his time researching his specialty—arrogance in the workplace—and the rest consulting. His research has made him well known. “Everyone can relate to knowing someone arrogant in the workplace,” he said.

Silverman was recently named the most influential I/O psychologist by *Human Resources MBA*. “It was fun to have all these well-known people in the field rank me number one,” he said.

continued on page 26





PSYCHOLOGY AT WORK *continued from page 25*

## ROLLING THE DICE



Kawel LauBach

In 1998, Kawel LauBach was a part-time business school student in Louisville and working at UPS. He got the chance to move west to work for Southwest Airlines, at the time considered one of the best employers in the country and the subject of many studies of company culture.

“I had this epiphany,” LauBach said. “I looked around and noticed the actual enjoyment people had at work compared to where I’d just come from at UPS, which was a much more rigid environment. I started to study [Southwest CEO] Herb Kelleher and found several writings from the I/O perspective and read several things about the culture of Southwest and why it was so productive.”

LauBach decided I/O was what he wanted as a career. He started researching schools with I/O psychology programs and eventually chose MTSU.

After MTSU, LauBach returned to Southwest Airlines, moving to Dallas to work in the personnel department. “I was able to really get a hands-on, bird’s-eye view of how the culture of that organization was implemented, from employee relations to training, hiring, and employment decisions,” he said.

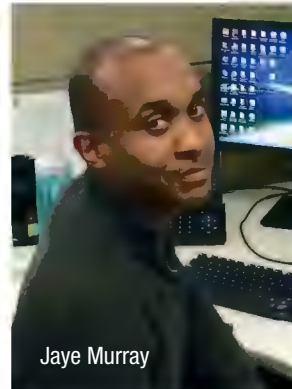
Because Southwest was such a hotbed of recruiting, other companies wanted to get access to what LauBach calls the “secret sauce” of its success. He regularly got calls from recruiters for other companies, asking him to come join them and share his knowledge. Each time, LauBach said no, but when entertainment giant Harrah’s approached him about working at their Shreveport casino, he decided to take the chance. Once on board, LauBach helped the company address issues that were leading to high turnover and developed an interest in the fast-growing gaming industry.

I/O psychology has helped him find effective ways to motivate people to be more productive and get to the heart of why people work harder at some jobs than at others.

Today, LauBach is chief human resource officer for the Mohegan Tribal Gaming Authority, an organization with 13,000 employees. He’s been able to apply a lot of the principles he learned at MTSU and at Southwest Airlines. He finds that his I/O psychology background has helped him find effective ways to motivate people to be more productive and get to the heart of why people work harder at some jobs than at others.

“I/O psychology really keys in on that interpersonal relationship, the correlation between guest service and employee morale,” LauBach said. “I say this all the time: policies don’t motivate. Our employees are required to blow away the customer. . . . You’ve got to create an experience that blows away your team member, and then they’ll essentially reciprocate by blowing away the customer.”

## MR. MURRAY GOES TO WASHINGTON



Jaye Murray

Jaye Murray, an Orlando native, is a recent graduate of MTSU’s psychology master’s program. He credits the University for helping him get where he is today.

At the University of Florida, Murray

majored in psychology and minored in business. He planned on pursuing a Ph.D. in psychology, but discovered that he really didn’t like the research involved. And after earning an M.A. in international business, he found he didn’t have a passion for that, either.

Murray did an internship at Disney World and worked as a manager there for a few months before becoming a supervisor at a Marriott property. He started hearing more about I/O psychology and thought it might be a good way to combine his psychology and business backgrounds.

He decided he needed to find a school where he could gain experience as part of his coursework.

“I was an older student—I went back to school at 26—so it was crucial for me to pick a school that would give me enough experience to justify talking to a recruiter and compensate for the lack of previous experience,” he said. “I went to the MTSU website and saw they had a project with a client each semester and a mandatory internship, thesis, and comprehensive exams.”

He narrowed it down to MTSU, Columbia, and Minnesota State. After talking to an MTSU graduate, he decided on the University, primarily because of the work experience component.

Murray said he feels lucky to have been at MTSU when he was. At the time, finding clients to work with students on projects was difficult because of an economic recession, but he appreciates that the I/O psychology faculty was determined not to lower standards. He said they encouraged the entire class to collaborate on projects and help each other out.

An MTSU alum told faculty members about the Presidential Management Fellowship, a program that aims to recruit the best and brightest for government positions, and Murray heard about it, applied, and eventually won a fellowship.

“Normally, a lot of people that make it are from big-name schools like Harvard, Yale, and George Washington University, so to have MTSU in that pool, I think was really good,” Murray said. “It’s also very big in the metro D.C. area, especially among the schools that have government ties.”

Murray headed to Washington, D.C., where he entered the program and caught the eye of recruiters in the U.S. Office of Personnel

Management (OPM), who called Murray for an interview. He spoke of his experience at MTSU, including his time as president of the SHRM chapter.

Today, Murray is a training and development specialist at OPM, where his team works on policies, programs, and courses to develop senior executives and high-level managers in government agencies. He enjoys his work and loves living in Washington, and he said it all goes back to his decision to attend MTSU.

“I’m not sure I would have heard about the Presidential Management Fellowship if I hadn’t gone to MTSU,” he said. “I think I got my job because I took advantage of all the opportunities that MTSU had to offer.”

“The faculty is vested in your success and committed to making sure that the real-time work you perform sets you up to make immediate professional contributions in your career.”

—Brittany Smith '12,  
Regional Human Resources  
Manager, Dollar General

## Support I/O Psych at MTSU!

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—Amber Fritsch '14, consultant, APT Metrics Inc.

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